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ABSTRACT

The report presents an objective third-party assessment of the WALKABOUT program. Now in its third year in Northern Westchester County, New York, this program offers an optional learning environment for Grade 12 students in which the skills and self confidence needed to be effective adults are nurtured. In order to attain WALKABOUT program goals, students must experience five challenge environments: wilderness, academics, community service, work experience internship, and oral presentations. Analyses of questionnaire data indicate that the program is enthusiastically endorsed by its graduates and their parents. Guidance personnel in the contributing high schools also find great value for the students in the program. Test results demonstrate important improvements in self-image and self-acceptance and maintenance of basic academic competence in reading. The perceived weaknesses of the program are mostly concerned with the lack of a clearer academic structure. Recommendations evolving from the evaluation are clarification of the goals and standards of the academic program, more frequent communication between WALKABOUT students and guidance counselors, and regular contact between WALKABOUT staff and parents of program students. Future evaluation should include testing a comparison group to insure that the improvement in the self-concept measures is not due to maturation. (NEC)

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FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

1978-79

PREPARED BY:

MAGI EDUCATIONAL SERVICES, INC.
26 CALVERT STREET
HARRISON, NEW YORK 10528

RC 011702

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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PREFACE

WALKABOUT has recently completed its second year as a New York State Title IV-C Developer. The purpose of this report is to present an objective third-party account of the assessment measures which WALKABOUT has incorporated into its program this year.

The WALKABOUT program provides optional learning environments for the full school year for high school seniors served by Northern Westchester BOCES. The intent of the project is to create a model that will encourage other school districts and/or BOCES to adopt and/or adapt these learning environments for their students.

The term WALKABOUT is symbolic of an effective transition from youth to adulthood. The goal of the program is to have the students acquire the skills and the confidence to take charge of their lives and make a meaningful difference in the world--in other words, to acquire the skills needed to be effective adults. There are five major challenge environments which students experience in order to attain the WALKABOUT program's goals:

1) Wilderness
2) Academics
3) Community Service
4) Internship
5) Presentations

Each of the young men and women in the program should feel some success in all five challenge areas.

This report is divided into four main sections so that documentation from each data source is clearly presented. Section I presents evaluative data from last year's (1977-78) WALKABOUT students. Parental ratings of the WALKABOUT experience are presented in Section II for students during the 1978-79 school year. Section III relates the data obtained from questionnaires distributed to home-school guidance counselors; and, finally, Section IV presents the testing outcomes of the WALKABOUT students for the 1978-79 year on standardized measures as well as rating scales. A summary is included as well as recommendations for the program next year, in order to meet requirements for IV-C Validation. Parental and guidance counselors open-ended comments regarding WALKABOUT are also included so that the reader can perceive areas of concern as well as the enthusiasm and praise for WALKABOUT that these two groups have reported.

WALKABOUT is now in its third year of development. To help clarify the progress of the program, each year is identified with a Roman numeral. WALKABOUT I refers to the school year of 1977-1978; WALKABOUT II refers to 1978-1979; and WALKABOUT III refers to the current year, 1979-1980.

WALKABOUT

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SECTION I

Student Data from WALKABOUT I, 1977-1978

A Follow-up Questionnaire, sent in May of 1979, was sent out to gain the opinions and program ratings of project alumni one year after their WALKABOUT experience.

To see how much change that experience had introduced in their lives, they were asked to respond to the six areas in Table I, along a scale of 1 to 3:

1 = significant change

2 = some change

3 = little or no change

Table 1

SUMMARY OF FOLLOW-UP REPORT 1978-79*

	Area	Mean Rating
1.	"The way I handle physical stress"	1.56
2.	"The way I handle personal problems and emotional stress"	1.33
3.	"The way I handle academic work"	2.22
4.	"The way I handle interpersonal relationships with friends and associates"	1.11
5.	"The kinds of people I associate with"	2.00
6.	"My perceptions of the world around me"	1.38
7.	"My interest and involvement in community issues and affairs"	2.25
8.	"My interest in general (hobbies, social actions, literature, etc.)"	1.50
9.	"My career goals"	1.38

*9 of the 20 students enrolled responded

Last year's students rated the WALKABOUT Program as having made significant change in the way they now handle the following areas:

- °interpersonal relationships with friends and associates
- °personal problems and emotional stress
- °perceptions of the world around themselves
- °general interests (hobbies, social actions, literature, etc.)
- °career goals
- °the handling of physical stress

They indicated that some change was made in:

- °handling of academic work
- °kinds of people they associate with
- °interest and involvement in community issues and affairs

Also gleaned from this questionnaire were data concerning these former students' perceptions of the importance of specific parts of their WALKABOUT experience. A summary of their responses to the four questions asked follows.

1. Looking back over your WALKABOUT year, what do you feel was the most significant learning experience you had? In other words, the one which you feel has changed or helped (stayed with) you the most.

Learning Experience	Percentages of Response
Internship	33%
How to deal with people more effectively	33%
Confidence in self	22%
Camping	11%

Looking back over your WALKABOUT year, what do you feel was the most significant practical skill you acquired?

Learning Experience	Percentage of Response
How to deal with people	45%
Internship	22%
Learning how to study	11%
Finding the person you are	11%
Finding out that I can teach myself	11%

In what ways could WALKABOUT have helped you more (i.e., in retrospect, what weaknesses do you see in the program? What criticisms of the program do you have?)

Weaknesses	Percentage of Response
None	44%
Not enough structure in the academic area	22%
Did not use the full resources of the staff	11%
Academic standards were not high enough	11%
Not enough real life situations	11%
Directing is too big of a job to combine with teaching	11%

4. In general, what has your WALKABOUT experience meant to you this year. In other words, in what ways do you feel this year would have been different if you had not participated in the WALKABOUT program?

How WALKABOUT Has Made A Difference	Percentage of Response
Helped me to plan my future	33%
Has brought me closer to myself and others	22%
Helped me to grow in general	22%
Has enabled me to adjust to life in college	11%
Helped me to graduate from high school	11%
Instrumental in my setting standards for myself	11%

Overall, students' responses indicated a high feeling of pride and gratefulness to WALKABOUT. They especially valued their internships, their improved ability to deal with people. They increased confidence in themselves, and found out who they are and where they are going. The perceived weaknesses of the program were mostly concerned with the lack of a clearer academic structure.

SECTION II

Each of the WALKABOUT II parents (of 1978-79 students) was asked to rate the program in ten categories, in May of 1979. The poles of the rating scale implemented to judge the areas below were:

1 = highly negative

3 = highly positive

Table 2

SUMMARY OF PARENTAL RATING OF WALKABOUT PROGRAM
1978-79*

	Area	Mean Rating
1.	Competency of staff	2.86
2.	Availability of staff to discuss son/daughter's progress	2.73
3.	Adequacy of academic component of program	2.29
4.	Usefulness of outdoor experience component	2.80
5.	Usefulness of community service component	2.47
6.	Usefulness of my son/daughter's internship (career experience)	2.60
7.	Project's effect on my son/daughter's attitude toward school and learning	2.70
8.	Project's effect on my son/daughter's self-image or self-confidence	2.87
9.	Project's effect on my son/daughter's social relationships	2.80
10.	Project's effect on my son/daughter's development of responsibility	2.70

*Parents of 18 students responded

As a group, parents gave the WALKABOUT program high ratings in all areas of inquiry. The highest rank (2.87) was given to "projects' effect on my son/daughter in self-image or self-confidence". The lowest rank (which was still positive : 2.29), was given to "adequacy of academic component of program".

All of the ratings fell on the positive end of the scale. This evidence supports the conclusion that the parents were, on the whole, satisfied with the program. More evidence of their general satisfaction can be ascertained from the open-ended comments which were made at the end of the questionnaire.

Future Oriented

"We are more confident as to her ability to deal with the future."

"His internship...was a great factor in his decision about his future and to go to college."

"Before WALKABOUT she was very undecided as to what career to pursue. Her internship put her on the right course and now she knows exactly what she wants to do."

Improvement in Self-Concept

"She is more confident and able to express herself more adequately."

"The change in my daughter is very marked in her positive approach. She is striking a balance between aggressiveness and just plain assertiveness."

"It has given him self-assurance. He is able to make decisions for himself."

"Our daughter has developed self-confidence and has learned to take charge of her own life."

Competency and Concern of the Staff

"From our first introductory meeting, we were impressed by the devotion, love, and enthusiasm constantly shown by the three teachers involved."

"The staff is excellent and they develop an excellent relationship with the students at a very early date."

"The closeness of the teachers and students was certainly a plus."

Of the comments which were made by the parents, the majority were positive in nature. Negative comments came from parents of only 3 students, and even these parents gave an overall positive rating to the program. These comments reflected dissatisfaction with specific points rather than a general disaproval. The two areas of greatest concern were those of academics and communication with the family.

Academics

"The academic content should be intensified."

"I suggest that more consideration be given to the academic component particularly for the college bound student."

Communication

"More communication with parents would be desirable at an earlier date."

"No progress reports, except at the half-year point, were issued to parents; no warning about possible failure in any subject were given to parents. WALKABOUT's assumption

that 17 and 18 year olds are 'mature adults' probably had a lot to do with the skimpy communication with parents."

The overall satisfaction of parents with the WALKABOUT program is high. The objective rating scale shows favorable ratings for all areas. Every responding parent had an enthusiastic positive statement to make regarding the program. Some of the parents were so pleased with WALKABOUT that a few suggested that the program be modified so that younger students could also be included. Positive ratings and positive comments plus parental suggestions for an expansion of the program can only be looked at as an endorsement of the WALKABOUT program by the parents as a group.

SECTION III

Guidance Personnel Data: WALKABOUT II

Home school guidance counselors and psychologists were asked to respond to an instrument individually designed for this group to gain their perceptions regarding the effects of WALKABOUT II on students with whom they had had contact. Opinionnaire data were collected during May of 1979, at the same time Student Follow-up and Parent Questionnaires were circulated. The criteria along which guidance personnel were asked to rate the project's effects were:

1 = highly negative

3 = highly positive

Table 3 summarizes the ratings which were assigned by this group.

Table 3

SUMMARY OF PSYCHOLOGISTS AND COUNSELORS RATING OF WALKABOUT PROGRAM 1978-79*

	Area	Mean Rating
1.	Project's effect on students' attitudes toward school and learning	2.94
2.	Project's effect on students in the area of improved self-image or self-confidence	3.00
3.	Project's effect on students' social relationships	3.00
4.	Project's effect on students' development of responsibility	2.88
5.	Project's effect on students' development of career goals	2.83**

*Guidance counselors (7) and an assistant principal from 7 of the 8 contributing schools responded, 19 of the 20 WALKABOUT students were represented.

**Two counselors said they could not judge on this item.

The psychologists and counselors gave the WALKABOUT program extremely high positive ratings in all areas of inquiry. The highest possible rating, 3.00, was given to "project's effect on students in the area of improved self-image or self-confidence", and "project's effect on students' social relationships". The lowest rating, which was still an extremely high 2.83, was given to "project's effect on students' development of career goals".

In addition to the highly positive feedback of the psychologists and counselors on the rating scales, their supportive attitude towards WALKABOUT is further explored in the comments made at the end of the questionnaire.

"Clearly all three staff members are professional, concerned and maintain the highest regard for the students entrusted to them."

"Our student displayed a marked improvement in self-direction, self-confidence and peer and adult relationships. This program has contributed to her maturity and direction in life. This one year has probably been the greatest year of growth to date."

"The effect of WALKABOUT on her was to create the environment where she could trust other people and share herself thereby significantly decreasing her alienation."

"A student who was lacking in self-confidence and absolutely unable to talk to others--his shyness was so great... not only learned to do this but dealt with career goals in a self-affirming way and has been accepted to college (which

he had not planned to attend) to pursue a specific career goal."

The areas which could be improved upon, as noted by counselors, and similarly by parents (see Section II), were directed toward the areas of academics and communication.

Academics

"There is some concern in our department that WALKABOUT may promise more in the academic area than it actually delivers. This should be clarified."

Communication

"We seldom saw our WALKABOUT students. There must be a greater opportunity for students to regularly meet with their Home School Counselors to keep up with the latest 'Senior Happenings' and get some pre-college/vocational counseling."

The overall ratings of the psychologists and guidance counselors were extremely favorable in all areas. The results of the psychologists' and guidance counselors' questionnaires give a firm indication that, with a bolstering of the academic and communication area, they are in full support of the WALKABOUT program.

SECTION IV

Testing Outcomes: WALKABOUT II

In order to prepare a high quality validation application in 1980, student data on carefully validated measures is also necessary. A series of standardized tests and rating scales were administered to WALKABOUT students in order to disclose which devices would be most relevant for measuring program effects on students. The results of these measures are presented and discussed below.

The Rokeach Value Scale measures 18 instrumental values and was administered in September, 1978 and again in May, 1979. The results are presented in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4

ROKEACH VALUE SCALE PRE-TEST RESULTS

Value	Median Rank
honest	3.0
broadminded	5.0
loving	6.0
responsible	6.0
ambitious, helpful, imaginative, independent	9.0

Table 5

ROKEACH VALUE SCALE POST-TEST RESULTS

Value	Median Rank
honest	3.0
loving	4.5
forgiving	6.0
cheerful	7.0
capable	7.5

In ranking the instrumental values in September, the WALKABOUT students gave the highest rankings to those values which are moral in nature (honest, broadminded, loving, responsible); however, they did include some competence values in their high rankings (ambitious, helpful, imaginative, independent). In May, the students still gave moral values the highest rankings (honest, loving, forgiving, and cheerful) and one competence value (capable) was ranked fifth. These results demonstrate that the importance placed by the students on moral values at the beginning which persisted through to the end of the program.

The 18 terminal values on the Rokeach Value Scale were also ranked by the students. Terminal values reflect a person's attitude toward what goals should be sought. Table 6 presents the pre-test results, followed by Table 7 which supplies post-test results.

Table 6

ROKEACH TERMINAL VALUES PRE-TEST RESULTS

Value	Median Rank
true friendship	4.5
happiness	5.5
inner harmony	5.5
wisdom	5.5
freedom	7.0

Table 7

ROKEACH TERMINAL VALUES POST-TEST RESULTS

Value	Median Rank
self-respect	6.0
happiness	6.5
freedom	7.0
inner harmony	7.5
pleasure, a world of beauty	8.5

In ranking the terminal values in September, the highest rank was given to a social value (true friendship); however, personal values (happiness, inner harmony, wisdom, freedom) were ranked second, third, fourth and fifth. In May, all of the highest rankings were given to personal values (self-

respect, happiness, freedom, inner harmony, pleasure and a world of beauty). A heavy emphasis for the students of WALK-ABOUT, both in September and May, was on personal values. It is interesting to note that the only social value (true friendship) which appeared in September and was ranked first dropped down to a rank of eighth in May. This may reflect the emphasis of the program on personal growth and development.

The Piers-Harris Self Concept Scale (the way I feel about myself) was also used as a pre-post measure in order to evaluate WALKABOUT students. A group mean score of 54.05 was attained in September, 1978. This mean score fell in the 52nd percentile of the norms. Post-testing resulted in a group mean of 64.77 which lies at the 82nd percentile.

A Sandler's A statistic which tests the significance of a difference between correlated scores, was performed on the difference between pre and post-test raw scores. The significant results obtained ($p < .001$), establish that the students have developed a more positive attitude toward themselves after their 10-month WALKABOUT experience.

A third rating scale, the How I See Myself Scale, was administered, both in September and May. For purposes of this evaluative effort, attitudes towards the following variables were identified and measured:

physical adequacy
physical appearance
academic adequacy
teacher/school
control of feelings

risks

perseverance

organization

individual projects

self-confidence

committee participation

public speaking

Significant improvements ($p < .05$) were found in attitudes toward physical adequacy, physical appearance, teacher/school, control of feelings, self-confidence and public speaking.

The Test of Academic Progress Reading and Literature sub-tests were taken by WALKABOUT students in June, 1979, the results are presented in Table 8 below.

Table 8

TAP TEST - READING AND LITERATURE RESULTS
June, 1979

Sub-test	Mean Score	Percentile
Reading	46.2	59th percentile
Literature	30.0	40th percentile

The achievement in Reading shows that this basic academic skill was maintained at an appropriate level. The lower score in Literature reflects the difference between the test items & the books studied during the year.

The last measure here reported, Expressing Current Opinions A Survey of Student Attitudes, was administered to the students of WALKABOUT in September, 1978 and May, 1979. This test consists of 19 multiple choice items covering important aspects of environmental concern. The test was designed to measure degree of agreement with ecologists toward evnironmental issues.

In September, the mean score for the group was 8.22 and in May, the mean score was 9.6. The increase was not significant.

The rating scale and test results reported above will serve as the basis for preparing the 1979-80 evaluation design.

SUMMARY

The WALKABOUT program is enthusiastically endorsed by its graduates and their parents. Guidance personnel in the contributing high schools of the district also found great value for the students in the program. Test results demonstrated important improvements in self-image and self-acceptance. Basic academic competence in Reading was maintained.

Specific mention should be made regarding these students' achievements, even though no formal assessment recorded the events. In the wilderness, every student succesfully accomplished difficult physical tasks. All students contributed to some community project. Every student was able to find and keep a job during their internship. At the end of the year, each student spoke before his parents and peers, as the year's experiences were reviewed in an emotional, and rewarding, public meeting.

The academic component was questioned frequently. It needs to be strengthened.

Selected comments by parents and guidance counselors are presented at the end of the report.

WALKABOUT RECOMMENDATIONS

I. Program

1. Clarification of the academic program, its goals and standards.

2. More frequent communication between WALKABOUT students and guidance counselors at their home schools.

3. Regular contact between WALKABOUT staff and parents of students in their program.

II. Evaluation Instruments

1. For the validation application some measures of self-concept should be used. For a general measure the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale is recommended as an instrument with a good deal of research behind it. In addition, to deal with more specific aspects of self-concept, an instrument compiled in 1973 for the evaluation of Outward Bound (The Outward Bound Effects Inventory) is recommended. This instrument has reasonable reliability and face validity for scales of self-esteem, self-awareness, self-assertion, and acceptance of others.

2. The TAP Reading subtest should be repeated. This test is used by the school district to evaluate academic progress of high school students. The Literature subtest is not a valid measure for these students since it does not reflect the reading they actually do during the year.

3. To assess performance in other academic areas, the Adult Performance Level instruments are recommended. APL content and skill areas (community resources, consumer economics, health, government and law, occupations; reading, computation, writing, locating facts and terms, problem solving are appropriate to the WALKABOUT curriculum.

4. Some direct measure of specific achievements in each challenge area should be employed.

5. A comparison group should be tested in the self-concept measures, to insure that the improvement is not due to maturation.

OPEN-ENDED COMMENTS FROM QUESTIONNAIRES

The following remarks have been selected to represent comments made by the parents, and guidance counselors, regarding the WALKABOUT experience. Areas of concern are listed after comments of approval.

- The following is the text of a letter sent to our local Board of Education regarding our feelings about WALKABOUT:

  "From our first introductory meeting, we were impressed by the devotion, love and ENTHUSIASM constantly shown by the three teachers involved. The previous year's students (and many of their parents) were so pleased with the program that they returned to the meetings to tell us of their feelings. To hear these students explain how this experience has changed them in so many ways; how they had matured in a way they would have never done had they stayed in "regular" high school; how they now felt that there was "no mountain they could not climb"; how they developed such satisfaction in what they had done -- all this made us realize how good this program is.

  "By no means can this program be considered a "cop-out". Just the opposite is true. It takes courage to leave the security of a routine senior year and do something so challenging and unique. Students from the group applying for college have found that in 9 out of 10 cases their WALKABOUT experience was a plus for acceptance.

  "We can only hope that you will be wise enough to continue to support this program so that our youngest child and many of her friends will have the option it offers. Perhaps in the future, education will have to be changed to include this way of learning in order to avoid losing many a bright student to apathy. Maybe, in time, it will be motified for a younger level. We are truly thankful to have it here."

- Our child's year was not a waste. It would have been had our child remained in regular school with only 4th year English to do. There was no time for boredom and there were many challenges and a show of deep interest by their teachers.

- WALKABOUT is the first new idea in education in a good number of years and it sure is about time.

- WALKABOUT had a very positive effect on my daughter. She learned to make many decisions... She learned to think! She still has a way to go to maturity, but through your program, she is well on her way.

- The WALKABOUT Program has had a very positive effect on every aspect of our daughter's development. It has enabled her to deal effectively with stressful situations, become more independent and self-reliant, and given her a feeling of more self-assurance and self-confidence.

- My daughter discovered that people care and, in turn, was able to give a little more of herself than usual. Before "WALKABOUT" she was very undecided as to what career to pursue. Her internship put her on the right course and now she knows exactly what she wants to do.

- My child's growth and confidence improved more during this school year than in the preceeding 11 years.

- WALKABOUT has given him self-assurance. He's able to make decisions for himself... It was a great factor in his decision to go to college. He learned a lot about caring and helping others.

- I feel the WALKABOUT Program did so much for my daughter. She had been "turned off" since her middle school days and made no effort in her regular classes. Her ITBS showed her ability a year ahead of her age, but she spent two summers attending summer school because she was failing. In addition, her relationships with her peers was poor. I was really in doubt that she would ever graduate from high school (she did!!). The greatest benefit that she received, I believe is in the area of self-image and self-awareness. She is more confident and able to express herself more adequately.

- I think the most important thing she got out of this program was "That there are things in life that you must do whether you like it or not (She does not like school work) do best without hating it and you can have a feeling of accomplishment."
  I work in a high school so I was able to compare the work required of the seniors. WALKABOUT seniors were doing the same work and more in some cases only with more enthusiasm.

AREAS OF CONCERN

- Advisor could keep a closer look into community projects and put in a little more effort on their part.

- WALKABOUT classes held on days when every district was closed caused great concern for transportation.

- Transportation to and from community service projects caused a financial strain on some families.

- The academic content should be intensified. The supervision of the training program and community project should be more frequent. The active structural aspects could bear strengthening.

- I feel the structure of WALKABOUT is entirely valid and the concept long overdue in terms of adolescent education. I would hope that in the future the staff will be even more insistent about demands of the program. I had a sense on a few occasions during the year that my daughter had too much say in what she did.

COMMENTS FROM HOME SCHOOL GUIDANCE COUNSELORS

- We have only had extremely positive feedback from our students as to how effective WALKABOUT has been for them.
  The staff have always cooperated with ours.
  This is a marvelous extension of our program for the right students.

- Our student displayed a marked improvement in self-direction, self-confidence and peer and adult relationships This program has contributed to her maturity and direction in life. This one year has probably been the greatest year of growth to date.

- My students are three very different types --
  One, bright college-oriented, but turned-off student who has always had trouble in interpersonal relationships -- The effect of WALKABOUT on her was to create this environment where she could trust other people and share herself thereby significantly decreasing her alienation.
  Another student who was lacking in self-confidence and absolutely unable to talk to others - his shyness was so great - not only learned to do this, but dealt with career goals in a self-affirming way and has been accepted to college (which he had not planned to attend) to pursue a specific career goal.

AREAS OF CONCERN

- There must be a greater opportunity for students to regularly meet under Home School Counselors to keep up with the lastest "Senior Happenings" and get some pre-college/ Vocational Counseling.

- It seems to me that the academic end of the program still needs a bit of strengthening in order to legitamize it in the eyes of parents and students who are college bound.